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Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Thursday Evening,
January 17, 1974.

Lesson. Matthew 26. vv. 36-56.

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done
Matthew 26. 42.

We were awakened early this morning with these words, so there is no alternative. Solemnly, and under the sacred influence of the Holy Spirit we seek to concentrate your spiritual affections and thoughts on our Lord Jesus Christ in His Passion, and deliver to us (this includes the preacher) the Lord's message from this sacred portion. The message is two-fold.

The first message of the text is heaven: heaven for all who fear His Name; all who love Christ; heaven. The message is bliss and peace, and comfort and joy because by the drinking of the cup by our precious Saviour as our Surety there is no wrath, curse, vindictive anger for His Church to experience. So the text spells out peace, holiness, joy, deliverance, comfort, help, heaven. In fact, pendant on it are all the blessings and promises, and the fulfilling of the promises of the everlasting Covenant. Every thrill of joy, every sweet season of divine comfort and consolation spring from the groans, agony and Passion of Christ, Every evidence, sip, taste of divine mercy, every experience of ~~divine~~ salvation, and you are brought to realise it cost His heart a groan; it cost Him His life voluntarily.

That is one facet of the Scripture now exhibited in the holy gospel before you, and illuminated by the eternal Spirit in your understanding and spiritual perception. If you want strength, comfort, help in your journey, your pilgrimage, - you are travelling fast home to God. Blessed thought! Travellers, pilgrims have a blessed objective and destination; to be with and like Him. Surely you will be happy as you recognise the milestones passing and you are close to the happy Day. This all springs,

has its source and rise in the truths of the text. "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

Another facet is communion. If you are His, if you have union with Him by the Holy Spirit, and as instruments, by faith and love and in hope, all these blessed instruments have a place in the experience of vital union. Faith is an instrument that unites you to Him because it gives you to believe in, on, into Him. The larger the degree of faith the more you realise union as faith acts on His sweet Person and glorious work. The richest degree of faith is to believe into Him: you are one, - bride and Bridegroom. How amazing this is! "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6. 17) This is by faith instrumentally, and love has its place. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John 4.7) Amazing it is to know the uniting, separating effects of love. One smile from Christ will draw you to His breast, give you to feel oneness with Him, and the activation of your soul in divine love will draw you from earth to heaven.

Hope has its place in the economy. Your anchor goes into the anchor ground and sinks deeper. I ask you dear people, are you in a favoured realisation of oneness with Christ? Is He your All? The point to emphasise is, if you are in union with Him you will pray for specific things. One prayer will be; "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. 3.10) Now take your examination; be catechised on this point of truth. Do you pray to know the fellowship of his sufferings? Why? What overriding factor influences your spirit in praying for it? Because here all the greatest blessings are found. This is where you have your richest Favours on earth, in the fellowship of His sufferings. I well recollect after the Lord Jesus was made to me a living, bright reality and in the day of espousals, "when thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown."- He remembers the kindness of our youth.- (Jer.2.2) I recollect my spirit being enveloped with an exercise to know Him more abundantly in His sufferings in Gethsemane and at Calvary. This became to me a mark, a blessed prize and objective to pray for, my whole soul longed for that and the Lord granted it. All through life you will

have your most heavenly times in that fellowship. What does it mean? Just what the symbolism of a cup sets forth.

A cup is a term of exquisite symbolism. It is used several times in Scripture, - Psalm 75.8; Matthew 20.22, and in the other gospels, and in Isaiah (51.22) "I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." What is the meaning of it? A cup is one of the commonest things in the usage of the race. Always you are bringing out your cups. They are formed for a purpose, - to contain something. If you carry it right through we are able to say it may contain that which is very attractive, sweet, pleasant. With a pharmacist decades ago a vessel sometimes contained a potion of mixture, very bitter, so as you will remember, some found it difficult to take. What it means is a portion or potion, a mixture to do you good. This is a cup. A portion of joy and sorrow and afflictions and trials God puts, our Lord, our dear Redeemer puts in our hand to drink, not to look at; to drink it. So in fellowship with Him, in the sufferings you pray for you have your cup. There is a great variety of things you never anticipated; things you fear sometimes, and things you have no inkling of. Presently there are things you have an inkling of.

Where is the cup prepared? Not on earth: it is prepared in heaven. "My Father's hand prepares the cup." (70) It does not originate on earth. The things we drink and pass through we know here below: most of them we only know here below. One thing we shall know hereafter is love divine. Many of the things in your cup you only know in your "light affliction which is but for a moment" on this planet. You will not know it above; there are no tears, sighing or sorrow. What God in His wisdom and mercy has seen fit to prepare for us in the cup all His children will drink it. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup." (Psa. 75.8) "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan.4.35)

So there is this cup that is out of our control. In that sense we have no hand in it. We shall have a hand on it because He will put it in our hand. We have no hand in the preparation of it. Cast your mind back for a few moments. Think of the various ingredients of the cup that is put in your hand, and it means there is a portion. The Lord has put a portion in

in your hand. I am not going to say we must drink it: this is a thing the Lord will make us sweetly willing in love to do. There is nothing harsh about it. One of the fundamental characteristics of grace is in the economy of God in His dispensations with His dear people, it is not the terror of a slave under a despot. It is a Father dealing with His children. The great principle to emphasise is the Lord always makes His people willing. This is one of the greatest evidences of sonship. Christ said, in His perfect example of filial acquiescence; "Thy will be done." This is a thing you will be able with considerable clarity to trace,- willingness, the Lord has created in your spirit to drink. This includes death. This was one of Mrs Coleman's great points: the Lord makes His people willing to die, or for whatever is in the cup, and the preacher is not ignorant of it. It could be contended on gospel grounds, in the sight of God you never drink a cup only as you are made willing, and He accepts that. You are willing.

(I must deliver to you the inspiration that is flowing in my spirit.) One point I should like to make is, there are so many things in life in the expectation of them, when you cast your mind over several decades, or perhaps it is nearer, you concentrate on various circumstances, emergencies, difficulties and you found yourself in an impasse, and you say you can never bear it. You will because the Lord will make you willing and give the grace requisite. All God's people have testified to this great principle of grace. "I never thought I should be able to bear it. I am a miracle, and what I am in is a miracle. Strength and help eclipses all I contemplated." Whatever there is in the cup, and it is there, you have already been drinking;- there is more yet: there is not only sorrow in it, there are joys in the cup. There are not only deep sorrows and trials and afflictions, there are also joys commensurate. Whatever is in the cup there is this willingness. So you see this takes it out of the realm of morbidity and gloom. You get sometimes to a mental state of morbidity and gloom, but, He is my Father; I am His child; His everlasting arms are under me. One smile of His lovely face makes me willing." In drinking it you taste a draught of His love, more than you have known in life. How wonderful this subject is! There is a potion, a mixture prepared by your

Father, and putting it into your hand, and then the drinking of it.

I want for a few moments to go back: a few points emerge. I want to say before the Trinity, before God, my God; Lord, I am not worthy to read the words that came from the heart of Christ to His Father in His hour of greatest agony. I want to say that. Blessed Trinity, we are unworthy to listen to or to read tonight the exact language from the holy, suffering soul of Thy dear Son to Thee, holy Father, in the gloomy garden. We are unworthy to hear or read or speak of it. It struck me as I read the words, Who heard them? Take the amazing prayer of the Saviour prior to His Passion as recorded in St John 17. This is for me an amazing thing. The Holy Ghost takes us to the holy of holies and gives to know the very language of communion that passed from the holy soul of Christ to His Father. He takes us to the inner sanctuary of His soul and gives us the exact language. I would therefore suggest two things. One is, we should be careful how we read this portion of the Word of God; that we read it not in an unsanctified condition, carelessly. Two, before we read, standing on the holiest ground of all we should make supplication to God for the descent of the Holy Ghost on us, that we tread with reverence, love, faith, worship this holy ground. This directive has been enforced by love on my spirit for some years. I dare not rush into the sacred scene, but go humbly, reverently, bowing at the foot of the cross in a spirit of worship, and so sympathise with my Saviour in His bitter Passion.

There are two distinct points that form a whole. First, Christ prayed to His divine Father, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." We may say two things. This may probably be one of the most difficult words to seek reverently to expound. Is it possible for us to expound? I think not. This was the initial reaction, the sinless reaction of His holy soul to the scene He was fully exposed to. He knew what He must drink. He knew all the terror, wrath, curse, anger in the cup as it was given into His hand by His Father. I say without the slightest hesitation: there is a depth here you will never fathom in this world or in the world to come. It is exclusive to God as to fathoming it.

"Tis to God, and God alone

That their weight is fully known,"

Here is a depth we shall never see the bottom of, but we shall know the fruits of it.

A brief and reverent suggestion. In your communion and fellowship with Him, do you not feel this yourself? Is not this something that comes from the depths of your soul sometimes in your life? "O my Father." I have felt it in this distinct way,-- viewing something that seemed impossible to bear with no rebellion at all. But on the point of the overwhelming nature of it you felt from your soul; "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from^{me}, except I drink it, thy will be done." What it must have been to the Son of God incarnate no man will ever know; so you have fellowship with Him. "Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." "O my Father, ~~if this cup may not pass away from me,~~ except I drink it, thy will be done." What a word! "Thy will be done." This is the perfection of holy obedience, and the spirit of Christ will produce a measure of it in you. "Thy will be done." I will say this: (I am wholly dependant on the Holy Ghost: It is wonderful how it flows into one's spirit.) You might say concerning the cup of Christ, how different to our cup. His cup was full of wrath, curse, anger, terror; it was not mitigated. Our cup is mitigated. God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." (Rom. 8.32) You think of it; He spared not His own Son. I wish that our hearts may flow out with love as a river to the Trinity. You may say Christ's cup was full of wrath, terror, anger, curse and not mitigated. In your cup are trials, afflictions, sorrows, and they are many. There is love in it, there is mercy in it, divine peace in it, God's blessing in it. This seemed to shine into my soul.-- My spiritual understanding and thought was there was nothing to mitigate that cup of His, yet there was joy. In this way; even as He went to Gethsemane and said; "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." and all through the sum total of sorrow joy shone from heaven. There was joy. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Thy will be done."

Amen.